

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT JA

SUBJ: DIET PROCEEDINGS STALLED IN FLAP OVER YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL

REF: TOKYO 4810

SUMMARY: DIET PROCEEDINGS HAVE BEEN AT STANDSTILL SINCE APR 13 AS OPPOSITION PARTIES BOYCOTTED DIET IN PROTEST AGAINST LDP RAILROADING OF YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL THROUGH LOWER HOUSE CABINET COMMITTEE ON EVENING OF APR 12. BILL TO PLACE YASUKUNI SHINTO SHRINE UNDER GOVT PROTECTION AND SUBSIDY AS NATIONAL MEMORIAL TO WAR DEAD HAD BEEN SUBJECT OF CONTROVERSY SINCE IT FIRST INTRODUCED INTO DIET IN 1969. WITH ONLY TWO WEEKS LEFT IN CURRENT DIET SESSION, LDP ACTION MADE LITTLE SENSE EXCEPT AS ELECTION CAMPAIGN PLOY TO HIGHLIGHT LEFTIST OPPOSITION TO STRONG-BACKED PROJECT TO HONOR WAR DEAD OR POSSIBLY AS EXCUSE TO JUSTIFY, IN VIEW OF DELAY CAUSED BY OPPOSITION OBSTRUCTIONISM, EXTENSION OF CURRENT DIET SESSION.

1. ON EVENING APR 12, LDP MAJORITY IN LOWER HOUSE CABINET COMMITTEE RAILROADED THROUGH COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF CONTROVERSIAL YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL IN BLITZ
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ACTION WHICH OUTRAGED OPPOSITION PARTIES AND LED TO BOYCOTT OF ALL DIET DELIBERATIONS BY JSP, DSP AND KOMEITO WITH JCAP CHOOSING

TO BOYCOTT ONLY CABINET COMMITTEE SESSIONS. ACTION FOLLOWED DAY-LONG DISCUSSIONS OF BILL BY COMMITTEE DIRECTORS AND BY DIET POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN OF EACH PARTY. VOTE ON BILL AT EVENING SESSION OF FULL COMMITTEE WAS TAKEN AMID CONFUSED CIRCUMSTANCES WITHIN FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF SESSION WITHOUT EVEN PRETENSE OF SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION OF ISSUE.

2. BILL, WHICH STILL MUST PASS LOWER HOUSE PLENARY BEFORE GOING TO UPPER HOUSE, WOULD PLACE YASUKUNI SHRINE (SHINTO) UNDER GOVT PROTECTION, AND WOULD PROVIDE GOVT FUNDING FOR SERVICES TO HONOR ALL JAPANESE WAR DEAD MEMORIALIZED THERE. CONTROVERSIAL BILL HAS BEEN SHELVED FOUR TIMES SINCE INTRODUCTION IN 1969. OPPOSITION PARTIES CLAIM IT VIOLATES CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEE OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION BY RESTORING STATE SUBSIDY TO A SHINTO RELIGIOUS SHRINE. STATE SHINTO WAS DISESTABLISHED BY OCCUPATION FORCES IMMEDIATELY AFTER WAR. OPPOSITION ALSO SEES BILL AS ATTEMPT TO RESTORE MILITARISM. BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIAN GROUPS OPPOSE BILL ON CONSTITUTIONAL GROUNDS. WAR DEAD SURVIVORS GROUPS STRONGLY SUPPORT BILL, SINCE THEY CLAIM NO OTHER INSTITUTION EXISTS PROPERLY TO HONOR THOSE WHO GAVE LIVES FOR NATION.

3. TASK OF PUTTING DIET BACK ON TRACK HAS FALLEN ON LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER SHIGESABURO MAEO. OPPOSITION IS CHARGING LDP ACTION VIOLATED PLEDGE BY MAEO GIVEN AT TIME OF HIS SELECTION AS SPEAKER THAT HE WOULD ALLOW NO BILLS IN FUTURE TO BE RAILROADED BY MAJORITY PARTY. AS CONDITIONS FOR ENDING THEIR BOYCOTT, ALL OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE DEMANDING THAT BILL BE RETURNED TO COMMITTEE AND FORCED VOTE BE NULLIFIED. FEW OBSERVERS SEE MUCH PROSPECT OF RETURN TO NORMALCY IN DIET PROCEEDINGS BEFORE LATTER PART OF THIS WEEK.

4. COMMENT: WITH BARELY TWO WEEKS LEFT BEFORE APR 29 END OF CURRENT REGULAR SESSION, LDP'S FORCING OF VOTE ON YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL WAS BOUND TO REDUCE TIME AVAILABLE FOR DEALING WITH STILL CONSIDERABLE LEGISLATIVE BACKLOG INCLUDING NATIONAL LAND UTILIZATION BILL AND SOME BUDGET-RELATED LEGISLATION, EARLY PASSAGE OF WHICH GOJ DESIRES (REFTTEL). THUS, LDP HIGHHANDEDNESS ON SHRINE BILL AT THIS JUNCTURE MAKES LITTLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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SENSE EXCEPT AS ATTEMPT, GEARED TO UPCOMING UPPER HOUSE ELECTIONS, TO FORCE OPPOSITION PARTIES INTO OBSTRUCTIONIST AND UNPATRIOTIC ROLE IN EYES OF GENERAL PUBLIC AND ESPECIALLY WELL-ORGANIZED LOBBIES SUPPORTING SHRINE MEASURE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ACTION MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN TIMED AND PLANNED TO CREATE JUSTIFICATION FOR EXTENDING DIET SESSION IN ORDER TO PROVIDE NEEDED EXTRA TIME FOR PASSAGE OF KEY LEGISLATION. DIET RATIFICATION THIS SESSION OF JAPAN-PRC AIR AGREEMENT SEEMS UNLIKELY WITHOUT EXTENSION.
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